

Support For
sinclair
ZX81 - spectrum - QL
and

TIMELINEZ

VOLUME 8

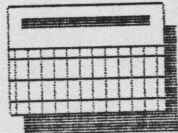
ISSUE 01

JANUARY 1990

\$1.50

TIMEX/sinclair

1000 - 1500 - 2068



CAMBRIDGE

Z 88

TIMEX/sinclair User Group News-Magazine

**S. N. U. G.
M E M O R A M**

**VIEW
FROM
RAMTOP**

**HAPPY NEW
YEARS**

Towards the end of my Florida vacation on the 4th of January, I was one hour in flight out of Houston International on my way towards San Francisco Airport. It was night, the time was 11:00 pm, I looked out of the window at 35,000 feet and saw city lights far below. I thought, "how neat it would be if I could receive any radio transmissions during flight. Then I thought, "wow, I have my Sinclair pocket TV with me, let's give it a try instead", and so I did. I turned it on and instantly channel 33, out from who knows where, came in crystal clear. I was amazed! Right in the palm of my hands, A Current Affair was being broadcasted and I was receiving it in a titanium shelled DC-9. I watched the program for about 10 minutes before the stewardess came up and informed me that electronic equipment that receives signals, ie, TV & radio, could interfere with the planes own electronic devices. She went further and stated that pocket tape players and laptop computers were aloud provided that the radio function of the player was not used. And so, I then pulled out my Lloyd's "walkmen" type player and my new Laser PC3 portable computer and proceeded to write this article. With this, I end here listening to the song "Let It Be" by the Beatles while the pilot is saying "Ladies & Gentleman, if you look out the right side of the plane you will see Albuquerque, NM". It is now 12:05 am. By the way, the Laser PC3 weighs only 1 pound & 9 ounces. It's a Z88 econo-clone under \$200.00.

Dear Friends,

During the past few months I have heard some very detrimental words concerning SNUG, and its leaders. I would like to address that issue now. This is intended as an explanation of the facts, not as an excuse.

When the discussions of the formation of a multi-national organization were begun, one of the most prominent things mentioned was the fact that the organization would facilitate the interchange of information. We were not going to be closed minded about our efforts and wanted to actively accept input from anyone interested enough to contact us.

Of the above ideas, some were successful, some were not. As the lawyers once put it - not only must justice be done, but it must be SEEN to be done. I believe that a lot of the problem is not in our efforts. It is the ability to communicate to you our efforts. I hope that by now that there isn't anyone who can doubt that the effects put forth so far are sincere. We are geared toward the maintenance and betterment of the Sinclair community through information.

We made some tentative efforts by dealing with an established publication, who offered us the entire magazine "lock, stock, and barrel". It was a major decision which prompted a cross-country phone conference. At first we thought we could pull it off. However, the responsibility of neophyte publishers to provide a quality 50+ page magazine that had a standard that had already been established, was one of the major reasons that we had second thoughts. In addition, there were other complications and the negotiations were discontinued.

In addition, there were personnel problems. Volunteers to accept the responsibility of putting together a quality publication were few and far between. Certain individuals took advantage of new personal business relationships and profited monetarily from them. They also saddled certain leadership with bills that were not their responsibility. In no way has any membership money been used at all. Start up monies has been from out of pocket expenses.

SEE SNUG ==>>

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TIMEXsinclair user group News-Magazine

SUPPORT FOR:

TIMEXsinclair's
1000, 1500, 2068

Sinclair's
ZX Spectrum+ 128K
Quantum Leap (QL)

Cambridge's Z88

FRONT

PAGE

PRINTED USING
sinclair QL
PROFESSIONAL
COMPUTER AND
THIS PROGRAM.

DESK-TOP PUBLISHING
FOR THE SINCLAIR QL
=====

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Managing Editor: Andy Hradesky

Co-Editors:

T/S-PUG: George Mockridge
T/S-SUU: Bill Miller-SinLink
TCW T/S_SOG: Mark Wahl
TAS-BAM, Inc: George Featherman
Warren Reed

Printing - Decollating - Mailing

Bob Orrfelt
George & Sonya Mockridge

N/L Exchange:

T/S-PUG: George Mockridge
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American Micro Systems

2175 Aborn Rd. #262
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(408) 270-9730
CompuServe ID# 72267,3572
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Make all N/L Exchange correspondence to:

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P.O. Box 1312
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ATTN: George Mockridge

Back issues of **TIME-LINEZ**, 7/83 thru 12/87
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Issues 1/88 - present,
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The PDSE Library is
now available to all;
covering T/S1000-1500,
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Contact **American Micro**
for further details.

SNUG_CONT

We had attempted to make a newsletter available for the CATS Fest in Washington, but again the volunteers ran into time constraints that prevented us from our goals. So far there have been a total of four members that have attempted some sort of publication in one format or another.

The idea of this publication was to be our communication line to you. Hopefully it would also provide the platform necessary to you, the user, to get the information you needed. There are those among our critics that have stated that we have needed to provide our information on Electronic Bulletin Boards. We have determined that not all Sinclairists have access to or want to get involved in modeming. Although there are many, many advantages to such a system we would like to look at that system as an ADDJUNCT to publication. And I believe that at this time our priority is to get something, ANYTHING out.

This brings up an important point. I feel it extremely necessary to have a QUALITY publication. For a long time, we put a great deal of effort into not what the publication would look like, but what its content would be. The first criteria was we would attempt NOT to reprint other publications' articles to fill space. Unfortunately, there is a great burden placed on the users groups to provide fresh material. And when the deadline approaches, and there is nothing new to print, an alternative was to incorporate previously published articles. Some of these articles would not have been read by all the membership, and the spread of information would then be accomplished. However, if no new articles were at hand, the editor (who really started doing this for probably the same reasons we started SNUG; i.e. no one else was doing it) felt the pressure to at least come up "with something", and wrote a small article. And so the spread of Sinclair information goes on.

We would like to present to you all new information. That requires some of your assistance. Mathematically, the odds of one or two individuals producing interesting to read articles all the time tends to break down over a period of time. The "guru" of say modeming may get burned out from supplying info and long for the release of the burden of pressure to produce. 1989 - was the transitional year. Many of our once prominent software writers, publishers, hardware hackers have felt the all too familiar problem of "I'm not getting any return for all the effort being put into this". The return can be financial, acknowledgement of effort, or for that matter, just plain old communications. So for one reason or another they have dropped out as interested parties.

The following few thoughts are as disturbing to me as they hopefully will be thought provoking to you. I have always thought of the

average Sinclairist as someone who wants to get the most for his/(hopefully) her dollar as possible. They have seen the elegance and power of their systems, and are maverick and possibly defiant enough to say with pride that we can do whatever the "Big Boys" can; maybe not as quickly but enough to be impressed with the results. I can say without reserve that the people in our community impress me with the drive to squeeze that last ounce of power out of what once was referred to as a "toy" and a "doorstep". However, as a whole, there has been in the past a sense of complacency - let someone else do it; I only use programs, I don't know how to program; I really only want to play games. The pioneering leaders, all of who should be congratulated for perseverance, managed to overcome these attitudes during the early years and still provide what was needed and wanted. I sense a degree of urgency in our efforts. There is a tendency to fade off into never-never land in the electronic age. A recent article depicted a museum's difficulty in obtaining examples of coin operated video arcade games from only FIVE short years ago - these "classics" were considered antiques. I tend to see things in seven year cycles (borrowed from the automotive industry). Is it in the realm of possibility that there won't be but a handful (read that as less than 2-300) of Sinclairists in the North American continent in the next year or two? And why is it that other "orphans of the storm" can survive and flourish while we allow ourselves to diminish all the fine efforts of those who chose to have the "Power Within Our Reach"? I am not one to be a doomsayer, but this is a case of waking up the sleeping giant and causing some reaction, and hopefully we will see some action. These statements hopefully will get some of us to think. There are those who have harsh words for this organization. In some manner there are those who feel they can provide a service that currently we cannot. However, the thing that is in deference to us all, is if we squander our precious resources (time, money, and effort) to put down or belittle someone else's efforts, in this matter we all lose. I would like to propose that if we could drop the animosities and work towards the betterment of the community at large then we all gain from it.

So what does that require of you, the member? As the robot from "Short Circuit" is so fond of saying "... AHH, INPUT!!". We need an organized effort from you the readership, be you a member or not. We need RELIABLE volunteers who are willing to accept an assignment, and its responsibilities. We have a massive need to build an effective WORKING organization. We desperately need people to help with the Charter (so we can obtain Tax Exemption Status); an Election Committee to prevent the same problems we had in our first election; people who are willing to help organize our Software library - Hardware library - Literature library - Database of members, equipment, contacts - Typists willing to help translate some of our published material to electronic format for its preservation - Representatives to contact former software and

SNUG2_CONT

hardware houses to release their materials into public domain. As you can see, the goals are large and the effort much. However, if we can get a LOT OF YOU to assist, the individual effort will be small. So can you spare an hour or two to help the group who wants to help you enjoy your hobby for a long time to come? Think about it.

In reference to previously mentioned explanation, I would ask your indulgence in allowing to relate to you what has happened in the few short months since you last heard from me. I do this because there have been things said that at least some information (good or bad) is better than none at all. As with most people, life has its ups and downs. My wife has had more downs than ups. My wife and I have been trying to adopt a baby for almost 18 months now. It has been a very trying time of waiting and waiting. During this timeframe, I have tried to make my management at work aware of the marvels of the Cambridge Z88. For those of you who do not know, I work as a Paramedic for Medic One Ambulance Service, the single largest private Advanced Life Support service in the United States. We are going to have computer generated Patient Run Reports for the field personnel. A laptop computer will be used for these reports. I had worked hard and developed a very detailed (24 page) proposal to convince the powers that be that the Z88 could do the job adequately and elegantly, and with power to spare. For the most part I was successful, until I encountered the political bean counter. I had not convinced them that anything but MS-DOS was capable of handling the job, even as they agreed with me that they would not need all the power and features of an IBM compatible. It really became a question of not bucking the system and how much political clout I had. Not being a terribly political animal, I lost out on the proposal. Back at the home, we finally heard that we were going to have a home study for the adoption. Frenzied activity began as we prepared for inspection. The visit went without a hitch. We were advised we were approved, and the baby would be coming as soon as the end of August. The joy was short lived. Maggie, my wife, is a brittle diabetic who has been coming closer and closer to going on hemo-dialysis. The stress of the preparations was too much. The night of acceptance, Maggie went into congestive heart failure, and had to be hospitalized. Her kidneys had finally failed and she was to be put on dialysis immediately. To make a long story short, she has had multiple surgeries and we are still trying to get to some sort of normalcy. She is currently home, but there has been a dramatic change in life style.

Again, I am not relating this to you all for sympathy, but to give you an idea why you may not have gotten a reply to your many inquiries. Just to let you know, the brief mention we got in the Sinclair column of Computer Shopper,

"MORE TIMEX SINCLAIR", by Michael O'Brien has gathered as much attention as anything SNUG has ever been involved in. We had received as many as three letters or calls a day for the entire month of June. So the backlog of replies is very high. With this letter I hope to inform you of the reasons for the delay.

We have gotten together the knowledgeable and capable team of Basil Wentworth and Paul Holgren to work the newsletter into shape. I understand that they currently have three months of material ready to use. However, the well runs dry quickly and your input is needed to tide them over. I also have heard that Frank Davis has completed inventory on the Public Domain software and is currently doing capsule reviews on ALL of them, which accounts for the length of time to get it together. Thank you Basil, Paul and Frank for all your hard work!

I have discussed the next point with several parties and all agree. As the past year has been greatly spent in preparation, and very little (visibly, anyway) has been given back to the members, we will extend the base membership for an additional year to January 1, 1991. This is return for the overwhelming patience the members have shown us.

If any among you feel that we have not lived up to your expectations for the monies sent in, I have directed the Treasurer, John "J.C." Cushran to refund your membership. We hope instead that we will earn your faith in accomplishing the goals that we have outlined to you. With your assistance we can move forward, and grow.

Mel Nathanson

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The trailing edge in computers

By ELAINE CHOW
Times Staff Writer

To Jean Wilcox, comparing her little Texas Instruments home computer to the newest IBM machine is like comparing a Model A Ford to a Lamborghini: Both take you where you want to go, but at different speeds.

"It is a so-called 'classic' computer," she says of her 6½-year-old TI-99/4A.

Users like Wilcox are akin to antique collectors in a fast-paced industry that emphasizes speed, power and the latest in technological superiority. These consumers see no reason to toss aside their "primitive" pre-PC standard and pre-Macintosh machines for something sleeker, snazzier and more expensive. They stuck with their computers long after the manufacturers stopped making them.

"It may have been abandoned, but it's been adopted by some great people," says Douglas Brownell, an auditor and consultant who often totes one of these early machines, a portable Osborne computer, to work.

The "great people" include groups where users can exchange information about hardware, software and support through meetings, newsletters and on-line bulletin-board services. Machine and operating system-specific groups for all kinds of brands, including the "classic" computers, are scattered around the world. The size of these groups varies with the popularity of their computer: The Pinellas IBM-PC Users' Group has 1,600 members, while the local Timex and Sinclair Bay Area Micro-Computer Users' Group is an intimate party of six.

Although their numbers are declining, these users of classic computer are fierce in loyalty. They say the old machines do the job — such as



Times photo — RICARDO FERRO

word processing, database management or recordkeeping — just fine, albeit slower and with less flash.

"I never thought about getting a Macintosh," says Timex Sinclair owner Warren Reed. "The Sinclair gives me everything I want."

Some loyalists even feel that for certain applications, their machines are better than what's hot on the market. For example, Brownell, a

member of the Tampa Bay Osborne Group, thinks the Osborne's keyboard is superior to the IBM PC's for data operations. He also thinks the Osborne's operating system is more efficient.

"You're not behind the times with an Osborne," he says. "You just have a machine that's not easily replaced."

Please see **COMPUTERS 2E**

"Those that believe in the machine learn what makes it tick."

— **Steve Trumann,**
Timex Sinclair 2068 owner

Computers

from 1E

Many of these "orphan" machines that came out in the early- to mid-'80s were the victims of manufacturer price wars or poor marketing strategy; others were simply lost in the fast-paced shuffle. Popular models include Timex Corp.'s Timex Sinclair series (originally sold for \$100 to \$300), Texas Instruments Inc.'s TI-99/4A (about \$300) and Coleco Industries Inc.'s Adam (\$700). The now-defunct Osborne Computer Corp. produced a series of portable, business-oriented computers (\$1,795 to \$2,795). All of these companies ceased production about five years ago. Tricia Parks, president of Parks Associates, a Dallas-based research company, estimates that during their brief lifetime, several hundred thousand Adams, Osbornes and Timex Sinclairs and more than 2-million TI-99/4As were sold.

"A lot of us figured, 'that's it folks, we're dead,'" says Faye Deere, president of the Emerald Coast Adam Users Group in Fort Walton Beach. Coleco, like Timex and Osborne, no longer supports its computers. "But everybody picked up the slack."

Left to their own devices, users have adapted, learning to modify software and do their own repairs. Most parts are available only by mail order, and original hardware supplies in some cases are beginning to run low.

There are third-party companies that provide equipment and support for these "obsolete" machines. Worswick Industries, a San Diego computer cable company, sells Osborne software and peripherals, as well as refurbished Osborne computers at a fraction of the original price.

"Are there still people driving around in Edsels?" asks Dave Mason, Worswick's technical manager. "There will always be someone using Osborne."

Users say they have invested too much time and money in their machines to switch.

Others stay with their machines because they enjoy tinkering with them, and they prefer to fool with a cheap machine than with an expensive one. With a screwdriver and a soldering iron, Steve Trumann has upgraded his \$300 64-kilobyte Timex Sinclair 2068 to a 256-kilobyte "pride and joy" that he believes is almost as good as an IBM PC costing \$2,000 or more.

"I try to figure out things to do with it that it wasn't made to do," Trumann says, such as computer-aided design (CAD). He uses a CAD program to build circuit boards for his Timex Sinclair.

Trumann and the other users in the Timex and Sinclair Bay Area Micro-Computer Users' Group (TAS BAM) speak of their machines with affection and enthusiasm.

"Those that believe in the machine learn what makes it tick," Trumann says.

Agrees TAS BAM member John Johnson, "They have no choice."

A bit of help

If you own one of these "classic" computers and want more information on it, you can try the following groups:

Timex and Sinclair Bay Area Micro-Computer Users' Group. Meets 7:30 p.m. the second Saturday of each month at Beach Federal Savings and Loan Association, 7777 Seminole Blvd., Seminole. For more information call Warren Reed, 544-4723, or George Fetherman, 546-4278.

— ELAINE CHOW

VECTOR-BASED CHARACTERS

By Timothy Swenson

There are basically two ways of drawing characters on a computer, pixel-based and vector-based.

Pixel-based is what most computers use. The characters are stored in a binary bit pattern cooresponding to On and Off pixels. The left character in the diagram is a pixel-based character. A pixel-based system is the easiest system to use with a raster-scan display. A raster-scan display scans the screen from left to right, from top to bottom. As it comes across a pixel it checks with the computer to see if that pixel is on or off.

A vector-based system stores a character as the endpoints of the lines that create the character. The right hand figure in the diagram is a vector-based character. A vector-based monitor uses these points to draw the lines needed for the charater and only those lines. The monitor scans only the part of the screen that has characters. This makes for a more efficient display.

Since most monitors are raster-scan, we can not use this advantage between a vector- and pixel-based system. There is one advantage we can use.

When a pixel-based character is enlarged it keeps its blocky shape. The larger it is, the blockier it looks. With a vector-based character, as it is enlarged it keeps the general shape of the character. The only problem that comes up is that the character may look a bit skinny with just a single width line defining it. This problem can be dealt with easily.

As an example of this advantage, I wrote a short demo

program for the QL. The program can be converted onto any computer with ease.

The program takes a string and prints it out in vector-based characters. For this demo I only made the program recognize three characters A, R, and T.

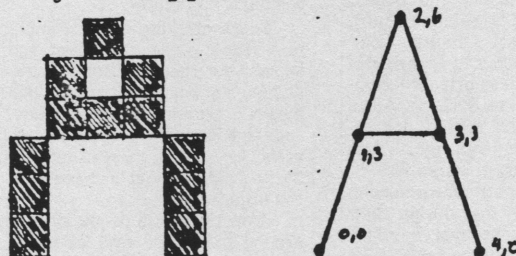
For each character in the string, the program restores to the line holding the data for the character. The first data item read is the number of points in the character. The more complex a character is the greater the number of points defining it.

The program then starts reading the points and drawing lines between them. If the program reads a data point of 99, 99 it knows not to draw a line between the last point and the current point, much like lifting a pencil off of the paper to move to a new spot.

The variables OX and OY are the offsets the tells the program where to start the first character and each character thereafter. Otherwise we would get characters drawn on top of each other.

To see the advantage of a vector-based system, change the scale to a smaller number and the letters will be enlarged. You could also multiply the points by a constant. By multiplying by a constant, the user can enlarge, shrink, expand, and compress the letters. No matter how much you expand the letter, the shape is still there. It does not become blocky and unreadable.

With a little effort this demo program can be expanded to cover the entire alphabet. It can also do other alphabets easily. It can be used in a wide variety of applications.



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T S C Sig T C U

TIMEXsinclair Cambridge S.I.G.
The Computer Workshop
558 Cypress Avenue
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
(408) 739-3977

SIG Host: Mark Wahl

Meetings: Every Saturday morning at 9:00 am
Stanford University
Jordan Hall (in the Quad)
Room 380C (downstairs)

Dates: January 6, 13, 20, 27, 1990
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SIG OP: Mark Wahl

P U G

Peninsula User Group
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Daly City, CA 94015
(415) 878-1773

Support for:
-TIMEXsinclair's
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-Cambridge Z88
-Sinclair's
Spectrum +128K
and QL

President: George Mockridge
Host: Walt Johnson

Meetings: Third Sunday of each month, 1:30 pm
Peninsula Hospital
1783 El Camino Real
Burlingame, CA

Dates: January 21, 1990 March 18, 1990
February 18, 1990 15 April is pending.

T S S V U

TIMEXsinclair Cambridge Silicon Valley Users
6675 Clifford Drive
Cupertino, CA 95014
(408) 253-3175

Host: Bill Miller

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Cupertino Library
Community Room
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February 21, 1990
March 21, 1990

TAS-BAM, INC.

Tampa and Suncoast Bay Area Micro-computer Users' Group, Inc.
5956 46th Avenue North
Saint Petersburg, FL 33709
(813) 546-4278

Hosts: Eric Best, George Featherman, Warren Reed

Meetings: Second Saturday of each month, 7:30 pm
Beach Federal Savings and Loan
7777 North Seminole Blvd.
Seminole, FL

Dates: January 13, 1990
February 10, 1990
March 10, 1990


```

100 CLS #0
110 SCALE 50,0,0
120 CLS
130 INPUT #0,"Enter a string:
";a$
140 LET ox=1 : LET oy=20
150 FOR z=1 TO LEN(a$)
160   IF a$(z)="A" OR a$(z)="a"
      THEN RESTORE 320
170   IF a$(z)="R" OR a$(z)="r"
      THEN RESTORE 330
180   IF a$(z)="T" OR a$(z)="t"
      THEN RESTORE 340
190   LET ox=ox+6
200   READ num
210   LET count=0
220   READ x1,y1
230   LET count=count+1
240   POINT ox+x1,oy+y1
250   READ x,y
260   LET count=count+1
270   IF x=99 OR y=99 THEN GO TO
220
280   LINE ox+x1, oy+y1 TO ox+x,
oy+y
290   LET x1=x: LET y1=y
300   IF count<>num THEN GO TO 250
310 END FOR z
320 DATA 6,0,0,2,6,4,0,99,99,1
,3,3,3
330 DATA 8,0,0,0,6,1,6,3,5,3,4
,1,3,0,3,3,0
340 DATA 5,0,6,4,6,99,99,2,0,2,6

```

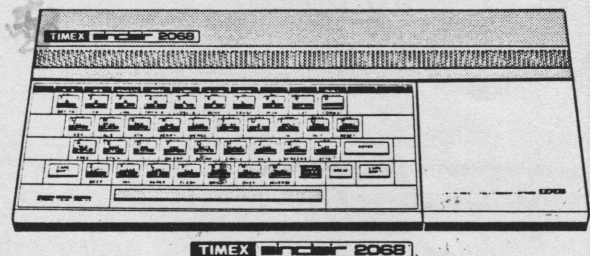
VERIFYING MSCRIPT 5T ON A&J MICRODRIVE By Walt Johnson

I have the MS5T version of Jack Dohany's MSCRIPT. It's the one for Cassette only. I found that after SAVEing MSCRIPT TEXT it would ask VERIFY? If "y" was hit, it would, without success, continue to search for the data.

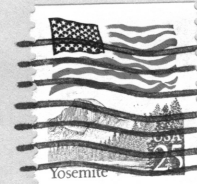
The problem was, that it had to be SAVED with a file number and a comma, and the VERIFY had to be done without the file number and comma. There are two ways to get around this.

1. After saving, it will ask to VERIFY. Answer "y" then BREAK. Type- LET N\$="&title":CONTINUE and then ENTER. (Be sure to type the title exactly without the file no. and comma.) This will do the job.

2. For a more permanent solution, send for Jack Dohany's MS5A Version of MSCRIPT. It's set up for the cassette and A&J.



AMERICAN MICRO CONNECTION
2175 ABORN ROAD #262
SAN JOSE, CA 95121



FIRST CLASS MAIL

January 1991

Mr. Donald S. Lambert
3310 Clover Drive S.W.
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

NOTE: ALL SUBSCRIBERS READ NEW POLICY OF RENEWALS